

TECHNIQUES OF PUPIL CONTROL AND SUGGESTIONS

SEPTEMBER, 1969

by

JOSEPH E. BRYSON

Director of Extension

Associate Professor of Education

The University of North Carolina at Greensboro

For

The Piedmont Association for School Studies
and Services

CLI
B91t
C.1

ARCHIVE COLLECTION
UNC-G LIBRARY

UA

LB

2831.92

13790

~~ELI~~

~~B914~~

~~est~~

TECHNIQUES OF PUPIL CONTROL

September, 1969

May I preface my remarks by suggesting and saying that these guidelines are attempted solutions to immediate problems for September, 1969; they are not answers for long-range educational philosophies. What concerns me most is that pupil activism will so exacerbate public school administrators and patrons in the community that it will cause us to lose sight of the main issue — a major overhaul of the public schools. Such educational features as: (1) Forty percent drop-out rate (greater in some administrative units and less in others); (2) pupils who have dropped out spiritually but not physically (I suspect the percentage is larger here than the actual physical drop-out rate); and (3) growing evidence to support the fact that at least one-half of those who actually drop out have better mental capacities than those who graduate should convince us that we need a major change in public schooling. The public education "establishment" may not know how to change, but the unmistakable and salient imperative is that either change comes from within or else it will come from without. Pupil activism is already a representative element. There is mounting evidence to suggest that the parents may be manning the barricades around the public schools tomorrow. Emerging developments such as: (1) Public school bond issues defeated; (2) School Board upheaval (this might be good); (3) superintendents and principals dismissed or resigned due to pressures (at one time this spring, there were at least twenty-two superintendent vacancies in North Carolina); and (4) the rise of private schools are but just a few identifiable barometric pressures indicating overthrow from without. At a time when the "knowledge" explosion is greatest and when the "knowledge" worker is in demand, the public schools are offering a hallowed, sacred, and penitent oration of the historic past. May I use two illustrations to make my point. First, in a recent issue of SATURDAY REVIEW, there was a feature article, "Can Urban Schools Be Reformed?" The underlying theme suggested the possibility of an "educational revolution" taking place in the Philadelphia school system. I read the article with a good deal

of enthusiasm to see what kind of "educational reform" or "educational revolution" was taking place. I have no qualms with the way the article was written; as a matter of fact the literary style was quality, I suggest plausibly that the author went to Philadelphia armed with a topic and then proceeded to look for features of the Philadelphia School System that would fit a preconceived idea. The Philadelphia "educational reform" was truncated in such action as: (1) Dialoguing on radio every Sunday morning; (2) Parkway Project — a school "on the town" (this is a most impressive innovation); (3) Learning Center Projects — "magnet" schools (6) IPI — individually prescribed instruction; and (7) etc., etc., etc. Many of the action-oriented ideas mentioned above are laudable and imitable but hardly shades of "educational reform." The title of the article was covered in question form and author, Wallace Roberts, astutely makes the observation, ". . . not much has really changed in three years." Perhaps Mr. Roberts' greatest contribution was to point up once again the difficulty and complexity of "revolution" in public education — a task that must certainly rival NASA's efforts to put a man on the moon.

My second illustration centers around an administrator whom in a recent address to professional people made the statement that it was his intention that his administration and those who followed him would not be in anyone's wake — that they would be so far out front in education progression!!! While this is a laudable and plausible aspiration, I am reminded that there are at least three other areas where no "wake" occurs — far to the "Right," far to the "Left," and far "Behind." Those who are so far to the "Right" and so far to the "Left" that they are out of the main stream of any rational and consistent educational perspective have very little to offer in the form of educational leadership. Likewise, those far "Behind" can offer very little except fat cliches out of the history of man's existence. Change for change's sake; doing for the sake of doing; action for action's sake;—no purpose, no philosophy, no course of direction, no continuity — not anything but an "eager beaver" who has lost his way so he redoubles his efforts. Is it any wonder why glib liberal action-oriented prescriptions have lost their magic? Can we, the educational establishment, like the wise owl of

Minerva come alive in the shadow of darkness? May I suggest that we return to the time-honored guidelines for achievement: (1) hard work; (2) dedication; (3) imagination; and (4) planning.

Pupil activism is an immediate real problem. Pupil activist leaders will have a definite plan of approach and operation. In many instances, pupil leaders will have spent hours, days, and months in "activist schools" learning the techniques of successful demonstration and harassment. Can public school boards, superintendents, principals, and teachers do less? It is the unwise school man who does not plan and look for trouble!

TECHNIQUES OF PUPIL CONTROL: DO'S AND DONT'S

These ideas are not new — just a common sensible approach grounded in the vast reservoir of public education history and judicial decisions.

Open the Door. The principal's door must be open to all pupils at all times either individually or collectively. The principal must be willing to sit down and talk — dialoguing at great lengths on any subject of interest and concern to the students. It is a first fundamental principle of public school administration that the principal's door must be open to at least two kinds of people, pupils and teachers. In order to optimize his effectiveness, the principal will have to establish priorities and hold tenaciously to them.

Know When to Close the Door. The principal must not carry on a running argument with pupils outside the school building when mob spirit and hostile atmosphere exist. If a principal does not know the difference between a good atmosphere and a bad situation, then he should not be principal.

Know When to Talk. The superintendent should not under any circumstances carry on a running conversation with pupils outside the school building. Only confusion, hostility, and a feeling of victory remains for the demonstrating pupils.

Know When to Stay Away. The superintendent should not go to the site of hostile action. He should let the principal handle the embroilment under proce-

dural policies that have already been spelled out by the Board of Education. If the superintendent does go to the site of hostility, then he should remain in the background, perhaps, in the principal's office. He may find the job of "picking up the pieces" considerably easier if he is not personally involved. Moreover, if he is not emotionally involved, his objectivity may "carry the day" in his favor.

Know Where to Meet. The Board of Education and superintendent must exercise great caution in meeting with neighborhood groups, parents, and pupils in hostile locations or ghetto settlements. All meetings should be held in the Board of Education's administrative offices, public school buildings, municipal facilities, YMCA, and/or mutual sites. It is almost impossible to undo the hostile emotional fallout of ill-advised and volatile meetings in badly selected meeting sites. Do not be drawn into open-air meetings where heated confrontation exists.

Develop Policies. The Board of Education policy on pupil activism must be broad enough to give considerable administrative discretion to all possible school developments. The policy must not suboptimize the effectiveness of principals and teachers. It must rather enhance and utilize the talents of those close to pupils and those directly responsible for pupil control. The policy must be broad enough to: (1) Cover a spontaneous pupil uprising in a school that normally has no pupil problems; and (2) Specifically imperative to handle pupil problems in a school that has a recent history of continuous pupil activism.

Decide in Advance Who Does What. The Board of Education policy may have many features but the policy must include at least these points: (1) administrative procedure for superintendent, principal, teachers, and staff; (2) implementation and utilization of all law enforcement agencies, including a prearranged plan of approach for all schools; (3) utilization of judicial restraining order (this is important); and (4) press and television policy. Administrative procedure for the principal to follow, if a pupil walkout develops, might go something like this: (1) Principal asks all pupils to return to class immediately in kind, yet firm, and positive way; (2) If they do not return to class,

then principal should tell pupils he is going to suspend them from school if they do not return to class at once. (He might tell them he is suspending them for interrupting and destroying the normal process of the school — a travesty against education.); (3) Suspend pupils; (4) Clear school grounds of all suspended pupils immediately; (5) Call superintendent; (6) Call law enforcement agencies — prearranged plan implemented (there must be full realization that when law enforcement agencies arrive, public school administrators are subordinated to a secondary role); (7) Utilize judicial restraining order if necessary to keep outside influences from school ground (under no circumstances do you allow turmoil, bickering, and overt hostility to continue on campus) — the sooner you clear the school grounds the better off conditions will be — again, this is the "job" for the principal, not the superintendent; and (8) The principal should make no statement to the press or television. Let the superintendent do this. (It might be advisable not to allow TV — press on the school grounds.)

Follow Due Process. The Board of Education must establish policy for individual hearing of suspended pupils that will satisfy due process. The Board of Education should study recent Federal court decisions before developing procedural due process. My recommendation is to adopt a general thumb-rule policy of no reinstatement regardless of the circumstances for all pupils outside the compulsory attendance age. However, severity of the offense must command high consideration in procedural due process. You might send dismissed pupils to a Technical Institute or Community College so they could continue their work toward graduation. At any event, go slow on readmissions. For those pupils who are within the compulsory attendance age, I would adopt a general thumb-rule policy of going slow on reinstatement. There are many circumstances dictating reinstatement at this age level, but I would categorically state that continued involvement would bring on permanent dismissal.

I would advise Boards of Education to set up late afternoon-evening schools for those junior and senior high school pupils who are not fitting the normal school behavior patterns. You might also assign over-age seniors who are not making adequate progress toward graduation to such schools. Pupils who are a constant

threat to principals, teachers, and other pupils must not be allowed to intimidate the integrity of normal schooling. There must be firm but fair discipline if the public schools are to operate!

Look for Trouble. There is an old adage, "Never Look for Trouble," that is passe. The theme for September, 1969, is "Look for Trouble." Have all your staff and teachers to look for trouble. Have all teachers move to the door and into the halls when class break occurs. Assign appropriate teachers to shaded areas such as parking lots, bathrooms, bus duty, etc. There must be an intense awareness of the possibilities of what might happen. We must marshal all public school elements in the search for difficulties. It is the unwise school administrator who will sit back thinking, "It can't happen to me."

SUGGESTIONS

Modify Inadequate Programs. There must be a complete study of all rules, regulations, policies, extra-curricular and curriculum programs that involve the pupil. It might be time for a change, especially where any inequality of pupils is involved. I believe in the one man, one vote rule too. This is a sound philosophical-political principle, so long as reasonable equality exists among human beings. However, there cannot be the naivest notion that equality exists among white and black pupils in recently integrated schools. For the black student to jump from rural and ghetto illiteracy into the mainstream of middle class public schools in the span of a single generation is an almost impossible feat — a feat no other group in the history of the American Society has been asked to complete. Black students born in the environs of middle class cultural patterns have little or no difficulty. Problems have arisen and will likely continue to arise in such areas as cheerleading, student government, etc. The Public Schools of North Carolina might borrow a pragmatic precedent from the North Carolina Education Association as its attempt to merge with the North Carolina Teacher's Association—that of guaranteeing Negro participation in the administrative structure for a period of years gradually, phasing out the guaranteed

element. I find it plausible to suggest that, until black students have been fused into the public schools for a considerable length of time, Student Government Associations entertain the idea of guaranteeing black student representation in the kinds of programs mentioned above, gradually phasing out the guaranteed element over the years.

May I remind you again that a black student does not come into an integrated public school with any semblance of equality. Perhaps ten-fifteen years from now conditions and issues will be considerably different.

Fallacies of Assumed Alternatives. The "prime mover" of life is never encapsulated between two possible alternatives. Public school organization and administration must not fall prey to this ancient "Idol". Indeed, we must not commit the fallacy of assumed alternatives so remarkably demonstrated in the aviators credo:

When you are in the air, you will either be flying straight or turning over.

If you are flying straight, there is no cause to worry.

If you are turning over, one of two things is true: you will either right the plane or fall.

If you right the plane, there is no cause to worry.

If you fall, one of two things is certain: you will either be injured or uninjured.

If you are uninjured, there is no cause to worry.

If you are injured, you will be either slightly or seriously injured.

If you are slightly injured, there is no cause to worry.

If you are seriously injured, one of two things will happen: you will either die or recover.

If you recover, there is no cause to worry.

If you die, you can't.

There are many possible alternatives, strategies, solutions, suggestions and answers to the present dichotomies. Let us use our imagination, dedication, hard work, and planning to optimize public schooling for every child — begin to think positively.

